

Stories of Hope: Macular Degeneration



The images on the playing cards wouldn't come into focus, but **Sharon Hayes** kept trying to play bridge, making bidding mistakes as the game went along.

Finally, another bridge player had enough. "She said, 'Sharon, you've got to go to the doctor right now.' And we literally put down the cards and we went," Hayes said.

That's how the Pasadena-area woman learned she had wet macular degeneration in her left eye. But her eye had deteriorated beyond treatment. Leaky blood vessels growing beneath the retina left her with a gray cloud where people's faces should be — at the very center of her vision.

Her other eye had the dry form of the disease. It advances more slowly, but is untreatable. When it converted to the wet form, her doctor injected it with a drug called Avastin, which stopped the vessel growth. Within five days, the sight in her right eye was 20/25 again, allowing her to continue painting and running her landscaping business.

She puts her hope in studies to find new and better treatments.

"The research is the most wonderful thing in the world. It's going to be the answer to so many things," she said. "If something new came out, I would try it in a heartbeat."

- Watch the Spotlight on Macular Degeneration talks
- Read about CIRM funding for blindness research

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